

The theoretical model of the school-based prevention program *Unplugged*

Vadrucci S¹, Vigna-Taglianti FD^{1,2}, Burkhart G³, Wiborg G⁴, van der Kreeft P⁵, Vassara M⁶, Scatigna M⁷, Melero JC⁸, Faggiano F⁹, and the EU-Dap Study Group.

¹ Piedmont Centre for Drug Addiction Epidemiology, Torino, Italy; ² University of Torino, Italy; ³ EMCDDA, Lisboa, Portugal;

⁴ Praxigemeinschaft für seelische Gesundheit and Institute for Therapy and Health Research, Kiel, Germany; ⁵ University College Ghent, Belgium;

⁶ Pyxida, Thessaloniki, Greece; ⁷ University of L'Aquila, Italy; ⁸ EDEX, Bilbao, Spain; ⁹ Avogadro University, Novara, Italy.

Introduction

Unplugged is a Social Influence program designed by a group of European experts in the framework of the EU-Dap project. The program consists of 12 standard units, one-hour each, delivered by class teachers to adolescents 12-14 years old. It is a strongly interactive program including a training of personal and social skills with a specific focus on normative beliefs. The program is based on several theories: Social Learning, Social Norms theory, Health Belief model, theory of Reasoned Action-Attitude and Planned Behaviour, and Problem Behaviour theory, which are integrated creating a complex model.

Social norms theory

The theory, developed by Berkowitz, states that our behavior is influenced by incorrect perceptions of how other members of our social group think and act (the "perceived norm") than by their real beliefs and actions (the "actual norm"). This gap between "perceived" and "actual" is referred to as a "misperception". Problem or risk behaviours are usually overestimated, whilst healthy or protective behaviours are underestimated, and subjects tend to change their own behaviour to approximate the misperceived norm.

Health belief theory

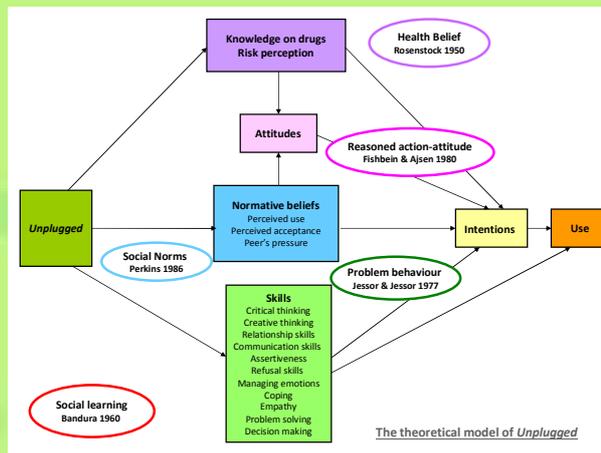
It was developed by Rosenstock and is based on the concept that the perceived risk of disease and the perceived benefits of actions to avoid disease are the key factors in motivating a positive health action. So, the provision of factual information about the negative effects and dangers of drugs will deter use or prevent substance use by creating negative attitudes.

Reasoned Action-Attitude theory

Developed by Fishbein and Ajzen, it is based on the concept of "intention" as a predictor of human behaviour. The intention is the cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform behaviour, and is considered the immediate antecedent of the behaviour itself. Attitudes and subjective norms contribute to model the intentions. The attitude toward behaviour is the degree to which the performance of the behaviour is positively or negatively valued. If the outcome of the behaviour is perceived as beneficial the individual may intend to or actually participate in the behaviour, but the strength of the belief is influenced by the evaluation of the negative outcomes.

Social learning theory

It was developed by Bandura in the 1960s: personality forms from interaction between environment, behaviours and individual's psychological processes. Social learning theory emphasises the importance of observing and modelling the behaviours, attitudes and emotional reaction of others. It's a sort of "mother" theory on which constructs of other theories are based.



Problem behavior theory

Developed by Jessor and Jessor, problem behaviour is socially defined as source of concern, and involves three different systems: psychosocial variables related to the personality, environmental variables, and variables related to the structure of the behaviour. The balance between risky and protective tendencies within each system and between the three systems determines the probability of engaging in the problem behaviour. When addressing these personal, environmental and behavioural factors and skills, prevention interventions can modify the probability of engaging in risky or protective behaviours.

Conclusions

From the definition of the theoretical model of the program, and of the contribution of the theories to the units, it is possible to identify the main targeted mediators and to study mechanisms of effect of the program. Every theory we identified contributes to the development of the units' contents, with specific weights. Problem Behavior theory accounts for 47% of the *Unplugged* content, and other theories account each for about 12-15% of the contents.

The application of the theories in the 12 *Unplugged* units

| Legenda | | |
|--|---|--|
| ■ | Social Learning | |
| ■ | Social Norms | |
| ■ | Health Belief | |
| ■ | Reasoned Action-Attitude and Planned Behaviour | |
| ■ | Problem Behaviour | |
| Unit 1: opening <i>Unplugged</i> | Unit 2: to be or not to be in a group | Unit 3: choices - alcohol, risk and protection |
| Unit 4: your beliefs, norms and information - do they reflect reality? | Unit 5: smoking the cigarette drug: inform yourself | Unit 6: express yourself |
| Unit 7: get up, stand up | Unit 8: party tiger | Unit 9: drugs - get informed |
| Unit 10: coping competencies | Unit 11: problem solving and decision making | Unit 12: goal setting |

Every unit includes different activities each referring to a specific theory, so that more theories are integrated in each unit, and each unit can be referred to several theories. So, the program works as a whole, integrating different approaches, and it is not possible to attribute its effect to one or another theory, unit, or activity.

[More info](#)

www.eudap.net

serena.vadrucci@oed.piemonte.it